

The Takoma Voice

A COMMUNITY JOURNAL & RESOURCE GUIDE ■ FEBRUARY 1991



Karen Elrich (Standing with "Preservation..." sign) and Nikita Pion-Klockner (to her right) join a full house at the January 14 Council meeting. After hearing comments from an overwhelmingly anti-war group of constituents, the Council passed a resolution urging President Bush not to launch an offensive military action in the Middle East.

All cover Photos by Wayne Botts

City Council Opposes Gulf War

LAUREN VOLOSHEN

66 Be it resolved that the City of Takoma Park strongly urges our President George Bush to refrain from any offensive military action or first strike and that the City of Takoma Park shall sponsor a town meeting on Tuesday, February 5, 1991, 7:30 p.m. at which citizens can bring their concerns about the Persian Gulf crisis before their invited congressional representatives," decreed the Takoma Park City Council, January 14, minutes before midnight on the eve of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, on the eve of the George Bush-initiated United Nations deadline for the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

The council chamber was filled with people that night. It was filled with people who had

come out, from every district of Takoma Park, to celebrate the dedication of a chamber seat in the name of the late Brint Dillingham, a leading Takoma Park political activist. But the concerned population of Takoma Park, showing itself as both diverse and unified, did not limit the memory of Dillingham to his individual accomplishments. Rather, they invoked his spirit and the spirit of Sammie Abbott, perhaps the most beloved mayor Takoma Park has ever had, and they told the current council, in no uncertain terms, to do as those tearfully missed men would have done and represent the people with a statement against the war.

Although the new mayor, Ed Sharp, and several council members had previously expressed objections to the city

council making foreign policy statements, they responded positively to the overwhelming demonstration of citizen desire to have such a statement made. Even Mayor Sharp, previously emphatically outspoken against Takoma Park taking foreign policy stands, was compelled to announce that if he still had a council vote it would have gone for the resolution. Only Bill Leary (Ward 1) stuck to the "no comment" stand and abstained from the vote—but while abstaining, Leary was unable to refrain from revealing his personal convictions against the war.

Rosmarie Dillingham, Brint Dillingham's widow, led the citizen testimony on the Gulf Crisis Resolution in her opening remarks during the dedi-

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Honoring Our Own

Profiles of Black America in Takoma Park



Norm Greene has been leading advocate for the arts in Takoma Park for over 10 years. The founder of the Takoma Artists Guild is pictured here with one of his many sculptures.

ELIZABETH REYNOLDS

In honor of Black History Month, last year we gave an historical overview about the local African-American community. For this year's observance, we are sharing the accomplishments of four black men who are at this moment living and working in the Takoma area. Next month's issue of the Voice, which falls during

the March observance of Women's History Month will feature profiles of four African-American women making similar outstanding contributions. One day in the not-too-distant future, their work will find its way into the historical record rather than becoming another lost page in our history.

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Kathy Porter Chosen to Fill Ward 7 Council Vacancy

KELLY LEAHY



Kathy Porter

Neighborhood activist to fill seat vacated by new Mayor.

It's full steam ahead for Kathy Porter, recently selected by the Takoma Park City Council as the person most qualified to replace Ed Sharp. During the Council's January 28 vote for the Ward 7 seat, Porter defeated rival candidate Juan Torres, Director of Public Works for the Town of Cheverly.

According to Porter, the most compelling issues for Ward 7 concern expansion of the neighborhood's recycling

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The Takoma Voice

GUEST EDITORIAL

Sammie Abdullah Abbott: An Appreciation

I have a lot of memories of Sam. Some events I saw. Some I laughed about with Sam and others.

There was the time Sam got arrested with Takoma Avenue neighbors trying to stop Montgomery College bulldozers from wrecking that block of Queen Anne homes... the time Sam jumped up on the Council stage and challenged the then mayor to an arm wrestling match—after that mayor called Sam an old man... and the time when I was on the city council and Sam was mayor and, in the heat of the moment I made the mistake of using his name and the word fascist in the same sentence (I never saw a man so anxious to give up as many pounds and years and inches to prove me wrong. Hey Sam, I was wrong).

Here's my favorite memory of Sam. Sam at the barricades...

In the mid-1970s, I was putting together a coalition of community organizations in Takoma Park and Silver Spring. One of our ad hoc groups was called CRISIS (Committee to Renovate our Integrated School Immediately If Not Sooner). Sam was very active in the group.

The Montgomery County School Board was trying to shut down Takoma Elementary School. They were pinning their case on a new racial imbalance policy that made any school with over 50 percent minority students vulnerable. We were right at that line.

Our position was that the school worked and the board's policy defined imbalance in a way that protected the schools of more affluent, less integrated neighborhoods.

The afternoon before a big showdown with the school board, one of our group's leaders, Princess Chapman, and I researched and wrote up a fact sheet. As I recall, it showed that none of the school board members who had approved the closing policy was served by a school with more than 15 percent minority students. We suggested that there was another, equally viable definition of racial imbalance if that was to be the criteria for school closings.

The evening came. Our phone tree had done a good job and about 200 of the 300 people in the audience was our crowd.

We were ready. The press was interviewing our people. The fact sheet was getting a positive response and focusing our group. Our goal was



**Sammie Abdullah Abbott
A Passionate Fighter for Justice**

simple and clear... five minutes of the school board's time to present our case.

School board members entered and took their seats. We made our request. The school board denied it. We protested.

The school board members got up as one and walked out.

The crowd got quiet. I remember thinking, "Omigod, what now?" This was not a contingency for which we'd planned.

Then... instinct.

Sam walked up to the board chairman's seat. He turned around and in that raspy voice of his, he started talking justice.

I looked at Princess. She looked at me. She rose and went up next to Sam. She called Rev. James Ross, her then minister at Parker

Memorial Baptist Church. He came up. Brint Dillingham followed. Soon, everyone was moving.

For the next two hours 200 Takoma Park people on the stage lectured the 100 people left in the audience. Sam did a real good part of the talking.

The school board called the police (none of us realized how many police—and ambulances—responded until later when we walked outside). We called the press and friendly politicians from the phone in the hall.

The police threatened to arrest us. We refused to be moved. The late Congresswoman Gladys Spellman arrived. She told us the board was being childish and she would bring them out to speak with us. We sat down. In a few minutes Mrs. Spellman led them out. We got our five minutes and left.

We never did get the old Takoma Elementary renovated... but we did get a new Takoma Elementary School built. It's open and serving our community today.

Well, Rev. Ross passed about four years ago. Brint died a few months ago. And now you, Sam. I hope you guys are together now and enjoying this story again as much as I've enjoyed writing it.

We thank you, we miss you and we surely won't forget you.

—Rino Aldighetti

**Turn to page 16 for
more memories of
Sammie Abbott**

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COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Adventist Community Services Center Serves Those in Need

FLORENCE DORN

Mrs. Santos came to the Seventh-day Adventist Community Services Center three months ago in a state of panic. She had been physically abused by her husband, then thrown out into the street along with her three children, ages nine, seven and four. She had no place to go, no money, no job. She was desperate.

Ralph Cooke, a case worker at the center, spent time listening to her story, calming her fears, gaining her confidence, and getting acquainted. Then, after a moment of prayer, he proceeded to address the problems.

Santos is a Hispanic woman who speaks very little English. She had no green card, so she was not eligible to receive any social services, and she could not legally be hired to work.

Cooke first located her husband and sought his financial assistance. He refused to cooperate in any way. So Cooke's first task was to find shelter for this family.

Another client for whom he had found housing needed some additional income. She agreed to take this family in temporarily. Cooke sought emergency

aid funds from a number of churches and organizations to pay for immediate needs. Once the family had shelter and food, he addressed the bigger problems.

First he contacted the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to obtain a green card or some type of citizenship status. This is usually a long process with no guarantee of success. Cooke was very fortunate. He obtained a social security number and a green card for Santos in a comparatively short time. Because the children were born in the United States, he was able to get \$400 a month from AFDC (Aid for Families with Dependent Children) funds.

Once Santos had her green card, Cooke helped her make application to the Housing Opportunity Commission (HOC) for an apartment in a HOC-funded building. He made every effort to rush the application through the system and get this family settled. He succeeded. Santos now has an apartment for which she pays \$81 a month.

The next step was to get Santos into a job training program in Montgomery County. She has chosen a course in nursing assistance. Hopefully she can find employment in a local hospital sometime in the future.

First, however, she needs to brush up on her English. She has enrolled in a three-month course for Hispanics to learn English. She is on her way to attaining self-sufficiency.

Cooke took one step further. He encouraged her to go to the Montgomery County Court to get some kind of support from her husband. The hearings will come up soon.

The Santos family is only one of 1,953 families who are served by Community Services each year. A social service agency affiliated with four local Seventh-day Adventist Churches—Sligo, Takoma Park, Silver Spring and Metropolitan—the group serves people of all denominations, and has been active in the Takoma Park community for seven years.

The largest share of social services carried out at the Adventist Community Services Center is individual casework. This involves searching out the problems, giving guidance, counseling, and support to people in emergency situations, and in filling an advocacy role on behalf of a client with other agencies and organizations.

The second approach to community needs is group work: nutrition and cooking classes, child abuse seminars, and other educational instruction. A comprehensive program for nutrition and cooking classes including support groups, seminars and follow-up is presently in the planning stages and will be announced soon.

The third involvement of the Community Services Center is working with community organizations and the county in carrying out their initiatives to improve living conditions and to address such problems such as drug addiction, child abuse, homelessness.

John Gavin, the Director/Administrator, is active on a larger community level through the Takoma-East Silver Spring (TESS) Center Advisory Council; he is also on the Planning Committee for the Long Branch Neighborhood Festival, presently coordinates church groups interested in feeding the homeless by taking food downtown. Gavin is also helping to plan another Thanksgiving in February—restaurants taking part in this project donate ten percent of their receipts on the chosen date to feeding programs.

Great changes continue to take place in our society. A recession, with many people laid off from their jobs or unable to find employment has added to the urban crises already with us. More people are in need of social services each passing day. The Seventh-day Adventist Community Services Center is committed to reaching out to those less fortunate and, in so far as possible, meeting their needs.

Florence Davis is a retired nurse. She is secretary of the Board for the Seventh-day Adventist Community Services Center.

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Washington 202-537-1655

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TAKOMA VOICE—February 91-15

Sammie Leaves Living

TERENCE MULLIGAN

Sammie Abbott, Mayor of Takoma Park from 1980-1985, died in his home on Holly Avenue this past December of *myelodysplasia aranaria*, a disorder of the spinal cord. Remembered for his individualistic political style, Abbott's commitment to social justice and community activism has been the foundation of this city's political and cultural identity for nearly two decades. From his leadership in preventing the North Central Freeway from destroying Takoma and Washington, D.C., neighborhoods to his endorsement of the Nuclear Free Zone Act, Abbott's activism, both in and out of public office, has left an indelible mark on the nature of this community.

The 82-year-old Abbott already had a long history of political activism before bringing his fiery energy to Takoma Park. In the 1930s he organized laborers in Buffalo and Niagara to build CIO unions in the steel, chemical and maritime industries. After serving in Europe during World War II, where he was highly decorated for his intelligence work for the 391st Fighter Squadron, Abbott headed the D.C. and Montgomery County campaigns for the Bertrand Russell Stockholm Peace Petition, which called for a U.S. pledge to ban the use of atomic weapons. When he helped found the International Conference of Mayors for Peace Through Solidarity in 1985, he already had 40 years of commitment to the anti-nuclear movement. Even in 1990, with failing health, he opposed the

waver of the NFZ act that was recently approved by the City Council.

An entirely new set of precedents evolved from the activism of Abbott and his allies in the community. National attention was given to the Nuclear Free Zone Act in 1983 because it marked one of the rare cases in which a small town made its collective voice heard on a global issue. As former City Councilman Herman Williams said at the January 14 city council meeting, before Abbott, "Takoma Park wasn't even known in southwest D.C., much less Japan." Williams made the statement as he and former council member Lynne Bradley presented a proposal to the current council to rename the Municipal Building "The Sam Abbott Citizen Center and Peace Park." The proposal was read just prior to a community discussion on the war in the Persian Gulf. This legacy of global consciousness in Takoma Park, largely inspired by Abbott, was reinforced when the city council passed a resolution stating its official opposition to the use of military force by the U.S. government against Iraq.

In spite of his and others' efforts to influence issues such as world peace, Abbott's primary contribution to the city was his long-term commitment to the resolution of local problems. He coined the slogan, "No white men's roads through black men's homes" during his long (and successful) battles against the North Central Freeway.

Back in 1971, this kind of community activism was an aberration in Takoma Park. But a small group of people, calling

themselves the T.L.C. (Takoma Limited Committee), had gathered to fight an increasing series of threats to this community. Transportation officials were about to endorse the widening of Philadelphia Avenue. In a separate instance, Montgomery College was attempting to expand its campus by taking over "Block 69," an area consisting of homes that were cherished by the community. Abbott and the T.L.C. were instrumental in vastly reducing the number of homes that were affected by the college's construction project, as well as reducing the areas to be affected by plans for the new Metro station.

The T.L.C. met in the homes of ordinary citizens, and Abbott was always there. Bob Mulligan recalls: "It was the effort of small group of people to prevent the reckless development and destruction of the residential quality of the community. Sam alerted people to hearings on the issues. This was before the city council had permitted meaningful community participation in municipal government. Mayor George Miller and the council tried to cut off the debate and prevent people from talking. At one point Sam was accused of being a communist. And at one city council meeting people were physically removed from City Hall by the police in order to stop public debate."

The T.L.C. tried to elect an entirely new council in 1972. Although they lost that first election, they did attract the largest turnout of voters the city had seen in years. The T.L.C. was only the formative stage of the community involvement that continues in Takoma Park today. "What it did was awaken a fairly substantial number of activists," says Mulligan. "It was almost nine years later when Sam was elected."

The stories of Abbott's concerns for his community abound. They are sometimes outrageous, like the time he jumped onto the platform at a school board hearing, grabbed the microphone, and demanded that the Takoma Park Junior High School remain open. Another time he challenged Mayor John Roth, whom he defeated in the 1980 election, to an arm wrestling match.



Sammie Abbott said that he "live in the February 16, 1988 citizen t Chambers. He is pictured above & were protesting the County phas

they wouldn't be living here!"

"The Maple Avenue corridor was a hellhole," says Williams. "With people like Sam and his allies, the neighborhood learned that "you don't have to take the abuse."

"He certainly was not a typical politician," says Bradley. "A lot of people don't remember how fearless Sam was. He published his phone number, and people would call him at all hours."

This was a far cry from his predecessor, John Roth, who, as Bob Mulligan remembers it, used to "throw the gavel down and demand that public participation come to a halt. Sam wanted the citizens to have the opportunity to call the shots, not the politicians."

The local government was really a bar to anything people were trying to do," recalls Tom Gagliardo, City Attorney from 1982-85. It was a "dynamic el-

Sammie's wife Ruth, his daughter Susan, and his son-in-law, James Arisman helped to host a powerful memorial service for Sammie. Hundreds attended the service and listened to several speakers recount the adventures and experiences that they had shared with Sammie.



PHOTO BY WAYNE BOTTS

REMEMBERED

egacy for Takoma Park



"fight injustice." He was a key figure over of the Takoma Park City Council lessing over 300 demonstrators, who back law. photo by Lou deSabla

ment" of Abbott to encourage others to get involved.

This dedication to the democratic process evolved into the Ward-only election process now effective in Takoma Park. Bradley considers that changeover from at-large elections a turning point in city politics. "The year Sam was elected (1980) was the same year we got Ward-only elections, but the referendum didn't become effective until 1982. But this changed the juggernaut that had run the city. Five of the seven city council seats shifted from the old crowd to newer people. That really opened things wide up."

"When the redistricting took place, voter turnout in Ward 4 went up by 700 to 800 percent," says Williams.

"The big change was that there was massive voting," concurs Gagliardo. "When Sam proposed it, his main idea

was that more people would run for council. In my ward, which was Ward 5, we had four candidates. There were more candidates, and as a result, more people voting. My neighborhood really used to be a lot of fun around election time."

Abbott was an active proponent of public transportation and environmental protection. And when Carl Iddings, who headed the Traffic Committee, urged the city to build speed humps in the Old Town neighborhood, Abbott fully supported him. As a result, the safety risks and noise problems have been significantly reduced in that area. "Someone like Roth would never have even considered such a proposal," says Bradley.

Abbott was also the driving force to gain rent control in this city. As one local activist said of his battles with unscrupu-

READER'S VOICE

Sammie Abbott, A Passionate Fighter for Justice

KAY DELLINGER

I met Sammie in the 60s, when passion was not at such a premium. Sammie and I were part of the anti-war movement, but he was also one of the leaders in the struggle to stop the North Central Freeway from carving up Washington, D.C. and Takoma Park. As a native Washingtonian I was very grateful for Sammie's dedication to preserving my hometown from a highway that would have ruined it.

Sammie's determination and commitment to the cause of peace and social justice were a marvel. I remember vividly standing on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in the 60s in a fairly large demonstration. The Capitol steps are wide, so even though the demonstrators went from the top to the bottom of the steps, we were taking up only half the staircase across. It was easy for people to walk up the steps on the other half of the stairway and there were also other staircases that could be used. But the police decided that we were taking up too much

space. They told all of us to move closer together. People started moving over and we were getting packed together. But the cops kept telling us to move more. I moved a little and I was right next to Sammie. Sammie did not move one inch. The cop looked at him. Sammie said to me, "I don't have to move." The cop saw that Sammie did not move but he was not willing to arrest him, and Sammie would not move. The cop said that everyone had to move except this guy. When everyone else moved just because the police told them to do it, Sammie looked at the situation, understood and refused to move. The respect I felt for Sammie that day only increased with time. Sammie had the ability to cut through the nonsense and analyze situations accurately and he was a formidable fighter.

He was perfectly willing to be arrested for his beliefs. Just as Sammie would not move one inch on the steps, he never backed down. And he was per-

secuted for his persistence.

For his work for peace and civil rights he was hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee and as a result he lost his job. He had a wife and children to support but he could not get a job for two years. He then started a freelance career as a commercial artist. His marvelous graphics publicized the causes he espoused for decades.

During the McCarthy period the FBI used to follow Sammie every place he went and park outside his house every night, watching him. It is difficult for some people today to understand how bad the persecution during the McCarthy era was. But there were people who lost their jobs who simply fell apart. They could not cope with the persecution. Some people committed suicide, others became alcoholics, and the marriages of others ended in divorce as a result of the strain. But Sammie did not fall apart.

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ious landlords, "He really went after those bastards."

Several proposals are now under consideration, both in Washington and Takoma Park, to dedicate some form of memorial in Abbott's name. But perhaps the most lasting memorial for Abbott and his family is the legacy of community activism that still characterizes the citizenship of Takoma Park: the community's commitment to the sanctuary of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees; the continued activities of the Peace Task Force; the struggle to keep a limit on the percentage of rent increases within the city (recently raised from four to five percent); and the continued success of the Takoma Park Folk Festival (which Abbott helped to found back in 1973 to benefit the Takoma Boys and Girls Club).

"I'm a perpetually mad person," Abbott once said. "I hate injustice. As far as I'm concerned, I'm living to fight the Goddamned thing. I'm too mad to sleep." But that fighting spirit was never left to one man alone. Perhaps Abbott's

own words can best sum up his influence on the community of Takoma Park: "I've pushed for citizen participation in things all my life, and I don't see why I have to change now that I'm in a position to actually do something about it."

Terence Mulligan is a Takoma Park writer who has recently published his work in Maryland Musician Monthly.



PHOTO BY WAYNE BOTTS

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

pal Bldg., 7500 Maple Ave., Takoma Park, MD.

~18~

Holiday—City Offices, Library, Public Works closed.

~19~

Co-op Nursery School Open House: The Silver Spring Presbyterian Church Weekday Nursery School invites interested parents and children to visit during our Open House Week, thru Feb. 22. The dates for visiting the 3-year-old class are Feb. 19 and Feb. 21 from 9-11 a.m. For the 4-year-old class, please come Feb. 20 and Feb. 22 between 9 and 11:30 a.m. We will also be accepting applications for the 4-year-old Pre-K class and the 2-year-old Playgroup. The School is located at 580 University Blvd., East, Silver Spring, MD 20901. For more information, call Alice Johnson at 388-0912 or Carol Blythe at 681-7569.

Nursery School Open House: Spring Knolls Co-operative Nursery School will be accepting applications for 1991-1992 at our open house, thru Feb. 22. We offer 2-, 3- and 4-year-old classes and Pre-K. Open house is by appointment only. Please call (301) 270-0324 or (202) 723-0683 to schedule an appointment.

B.F. Gilbert Assoc. Mtg., 7:30 p.m.; Council Work Session, 8 p.m. Municipal Bldg., 7500 Maple Ave.

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COLTA Meeting, 7:30 p.m.; "Twenty Troubles Free Trees and Shrubbery For This Area" presentation by Phil Normandy, of Brookside Gardens at the Takoma Horticultural Club Meeting, 8 p.m., free admission. Takoma Municipal Bldg., 7500 Maple Ave., Takoma Park, MD. Info: Clayton Smith, (202) 291-9110.

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Recycling Task Force, 7:30 p.m. Municipal Bldg., 7500 Maple Ave., Takoma Park, MD.

~22~

Call Him Up: In honor of Black History Month, the plight of the African-American is examined through skits, interpretive dance, poetry and song, 8 p.m.; Feb. 23, 8 p.m.; Feb. 24, 3 p.m., 99¢ admission. Public Playhouse, 5445 Landover Rd., Hyattsville, MD. Info/reservations: (301) 277-1710.

~23~

DC Youth Orchestra Music from China Concert, 1:30 p.m. Coolidge High School Auditorium, 5th & Sheridan Sts., NW, Wash., DC, tickets \$10-\$12. Reservations info: (202) 723-1612.

Reflections—A Celebration of Heritage: An afternoon of artistic expression by school aged area children reflecting their African-American

can ancestry, 2 p.m., for families; Free Tax Clinic for low income wage earners, 1-4 p.m., for adults. Call for income limit info. Long Branch Community Library, 8800 Garland Ave., Silver Spring, MD, 365-7410.

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Takoma Park Baptist Church Black History Gala Observance, featuring Mrs. Jennifer J. Gibbs, Principal of the Coolidge High School, as special guest speaker, and music of Henry Ellis. Info: 723-4700; Mrs. Mayme Wilkins Holt, (202) 882-2049.

Country Current Concert, 1-5 p.m. Municipal Bldg., 7500 Maple Ave., Takoma Park, MD.

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City Council Mtg., 8 p.m.; Recreation Council Mtg., 8 p.m. Municipal Bldg., 7500 Maple Ave., Takoma Park, MD.

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Red Cross Blood Pressure Testing, 10 a.m.-12 noon, for all ages. Long Branch Community Library, 8800 Garland Ave., Silver Spring, MD, 365-7410.

Free Blood Pressure Screening, co-sponsored by the American Red Cross, 10-11 a.m., for adults; Senior Focus—Hearing Loss, co-sponsored by the Washington Hospital Center. A discussion a question/an-

swer session conducted by a professional health care provider, 12:30-2:30 p.m., for adults; Health Yourself: a guest pediatrician will introduce Organelles and talk about keeping your body healthy, 7:15 p.m., ages 4-7, please pre-register. Wheaton Regional Library, 11701 Georgia Ave., Wheaton, MD, 949-7710; TDD 933-2847.

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Family Survival Series—All You Ever Wanted To Know About Getting Your Child To Do What You Want: An interactive discussion conducted by Dr. Karen Lewis, family therapist, 7:15-9 p.m., for adults.

Wheaton Regional Library, 11701 Georgia Ave., Wheaton, MD, 949-7710; TDD 933-2847.

Ongoing

The Revenge of the Space Pandas, featured by Adventure Theatre, Saturdays & Sundays at 1:30 & 3:30, thru Feb. 17. Recommended for ages 4 and up. Spin off the earth with Binky, Vivian and Bob The Sheep as time stands still—it's an adventure that's out of this world! Tickets: \$4.50/general admission; pre-paid group rates available; reservations strongly suggested. 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo Park, Glen Echo, MD, 301-320-5331, weekdays between 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Acting, Directing, Scene Study & Children's Drama Classes, be-

ginning the first week in February at the Library Theatre, Takoma Metro Arts Center, 5925 Willow St., NW, Wash., DC. Info: (301) 369-6124.

African Presence and Perspective—Artist Expressions From Around the Globe: In celebration of Black History Month, Stop • Look • Listen—History Through Art, will be presented by Takoma Traders Gallery. Call us for details! 7071 Carroll Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912, (301) 270-0138.

Films for Preschoolers, every Wednesday at 10 and 11. For ages 3-5. No appointment necessary. For information, call 727-1385.

Preschool Storyhour, Mondays at 10. February will feature programs on Black History (Feb. 4 and 25) and Valentine's Day (Feb. 11), including Penny Theatre presentations. For ages 3-5. No appointment necessary. For information or appointment, call 727-1385. Takoma DC Library

Sculptures of Drexel Yarborough will be on display at the Takoma Park Baptist Church this month. Info: 723-4700; Mrs. Mayme Wilkins Holt, (202) 882-2049.

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TAKOMA VOICE—February 91-31

Sammie Abbott, A Passionate Fighter for Justice

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His inner strength was immense. The striking thing is that he and his wife, Ruth, never became paranoid. They rose above the persecution in a way that was transcendent. And Sammie went right on fighting for civil rights and social justice. It was a remarkable testament to his character. McCarthy and the others like him with fascist mentalities could not beat Sammie. Sammie beat them.

In the fight against the freeway, Sammie was victorious. It took 13 years of commitment but the freeway was never built and highway funds were transferred to mass transit. That is the only reason we have the subway today. Sammie Abbott is responsible for the subway being built. It was fitting that there should be a subway station in Takoma Park. Every person who rides the subway and every resident of Takoma Park whose house increased in value because of the subway has Sam Abbott to thank.

As mayor of Takoma Park there is a long list of achievements that Sam accomplished. The Takoma Park Folk Festival which has presented the culture of the residents of the city in art, crafts, music and all types of organizations was started by Sammie. The festival has helped to make Takoma Park a community and by presenting music from all over the world, part of the community of nations. As editor of the *Takoma Park Newsletter* Sammie made it a relevant, important tool of communication. He presented the salient points of an issue to the readers so that people understood the consequences of taking an action over an alternative. The *Newsletter* informed readers about Takoma Park issues in a way that captured their interest and attention. Sammie understood democracy in its essence. He always invited people on the opposite side of an issue to write articles explaining their position in the *Newsletter*. He also never edited letters to the editor; he

printed them as they were written. That is not done now. He tried to involve the community in government in every way. He encouraged community organizations and citizen participation. When Sammie was mayor, citizens could make statements and ask questions at every city council work session. That is not the case now. In the elections that Sammie ran in, the voter turnout was the highest in Takoma Park history.

As mayor he led Takoma Park to become a nuclear free zone with one of the strongest laws in the country. And he opposed any attempt to weaken our law. Integrity was as integral to him as breathing. Mayor Abbott found another radio frequency that could be used by the police department so that the Takoma Park police would not buy radios from a nuclear company. He opposed having a waiver provision put into the law, and in 1987 he opposed a waiver for the police to buy GM police cars and

testified against the proposed waiver at a city council hearing. The waiver was voted down. In 1990 when he was too weak to go to a city council hearing, he strongly opposed a waiver of our law to buy Ford

cars and trucks. He watched the hearing on our cable television station and was outraged at the council for passing an unjustified waiver of our law for the first time in its seven year history. In June, 1988 the Takoma Park Peace Task Force recognized Sammie's decades of work for peace by giving him a Peace Award, a plaque, for his lifetime commitment to peace and social justice.

In 1988 Sammie strongly supported H.O.M.E. which was an organization that was formed to save the multi-family houses in Takoma Park



that provided affordable housing for hundreds of tenants. Mitch Snyder spoke at a rally of H.O.M.E. in the Municipal Building. When he had finished speaking to the crowd, Mitch went over and talked to Sammie.

Mitch re-

spected Sammie for his years of work for economic and social justice and showed his respect when he talked with him. It was a special moment to see these two great men together.

The last time that Sammie was arrested was in a H.O.M.E. demonstration at a city council hearing in 1988. The city council had done nothing effective to save the housing. At the age of 80, Sammie fought valiantly for the tenants. He and Brint Dillingham were arrested with seven other people. Sammie

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